



IFAD
INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
Executive Board – Seventy-Ninth Session
Rome, 10-11 September 2003

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 2003 SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE THEME OF “PROMOTING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

DETAILS OF IFAD’S ENGAGEMENT

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 2003 SESSION OF ECOSOC

1. Each year the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations selects a thematic focus for its three-day high-level segment, traditionally held at the beginning of the Council’s substantive session. The high-level segment serves as an important international forum for policy discussion on emerging development issues and for the formulation of policy recommendations for member states and the United Nations system. In December 2002, ECOSOC members selected the theme “Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development” for the high-level segment of the Council’s 2003 session.
2. From the start of the preparatory process, the President of ECOSOC and the United Nations Secretariat identified IFAD as one of the key United Nations agencies to be called upon to help conceptualize and organize the segment, and provide policy advice and technical expertise during all of its phases. Their request for assistance and support was grounded in a recognition that IFAD could provide substantive input to the process on a level that was beyond the Secretariat’s own technical resources and expertise on the topic. IFAD readily assumed the responsibilities associated with the role of lead agency, and its vigorous involvement and profound commitment were appreciated and acknowledged by the ECOSOC President and the United Nations Secretariat alike.



3. In this process, IFAD shared experiences based on 25 years of operations in development and rural poverty reduction, building on the findings and major policy recommendations emanating from its *Rural Poverty Report 2001*. By providing policy guidance and technical expertise to an international forum dealing with rural poverty, IFAD has mainstreamed its principal rural development messages and influenced the policy debate on integrated rural development and the outcome of the high-level segment. It has also made some progress in increasing the impact of its projects by integrating the key lessons and insights learned from them into international policy dialogue.

II. IFAD'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECOSOC PREPARATORY PROCESS AND HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

4. The high-level segment took place from 30 June to 2 July in Geneva, Switzerland. It was preceded by two preparatory meetings (one at the ministerial level) organized on 24 March and 30 April at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

5. IFAD contributed substantively to the entire ECOSOC process, including the report of the Secretary-General on the theme of the high-level segment. His report customarily provides a framework for the upcoming discussions by giving an overview of the theme and by making recommendations for further consideration by delegations.

6. The United Nations Secretariat requested IFAD to prepare an initial draft of the document. The main messages of the report – that rural development is indispensable for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and that agricultural and rural development need to be further mainstreamed into development policies – became the overarching themes for many of the discussions held in conjunction with the high-level segment and its preparatory process. (See <http://www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc/hl2003/Docs.htm> for the complete report.)

7. The meeting on 24 March sought a non-United Nations perspective on the topic by holding a brainstorming session with eminent academics, private-sector representatives and non-governmental organizations. Various speakers with experience in IFAD's approach to rural poverty reduction participated in the meeting. Many speakers emphasized the need for changes in the policy environment of member countries and for greater international support for rural development. An integrated approach that takes into account the economic, social and environmental dimensions of rural development was seen as indispensable in this regard.

8. The meeting on 30 April had greater attendance than expected. In the morning, IFAD's President chaired a panel discussion on coordination of the United Nations system to further rural development; and in the afternoon, he moderated a ministerial round-table discussion on the role of agriculture and rural development in the reduction of hunger and poverty. The latter event was co-organized by IFAD, the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. All meetings reached consensus on the importance of rural development for achieving the MDGs and the need to prioritize rural development initiatives in national and international development efforts. Participants clearly felt that the tide has finally turned and that after being neglected during the last decade, rural development is again recognized as a cornerstone for economic growth and poverty reduction.

9. To impress upon Governments the importance of having high-level representation from their countries, IFAD organized two working lunches in early June attended by some 30 Rome-based permanent representatives/ambassadors. These meetings proved valuable for exchange of views and enabled IFAD to ensure that concerns related to water and the establishment of a monitoring mechanism were addressed at ECOSOC.



10. The high-level segment was held from 30 June to 2 July in Geneva as the opening segment of the 2003 substantive session of ECOSOC. Ministerial and senior-level government participation was substantial. In addition, many executive heads of United Nations funds, programmes and agencies actively participated in the proceedings, which emphasized dialogue among participants. The political momentum gained during the preparatory process was reinforced during the segment itself. Ministerial round-table discussions on topics related to rural development became lively debates intended to advance policies in support of rural areas and their populations. During the segment, IFAD launched its book *What Meets the Eye: Images of Rural Poverty* and organized a photographic exhibition with the same theme. About 200 delegates attended the launch and exhibition, many giving positive feedback on IFAD's outreach and advocacy efforts.

11. IFAD was well represented at the segment and took an active part in all relevant forums, sharing pertinent experience and emphasizing the Fund's main messages and key policy recommendations. IFAD's President co-chaired with the World Bank a ministerial round-table discussion on "Global partnerships for rural development," and jointly chaired with the Chairman of the Group of 77 a ministerial round-table breakfast on "Market access for rural development".

12. In his inaugural statement to the high-level segment, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized the many ways rural development, trade, official development assistance and sound domestic policies are linked (see Annex II). He stressed the importance of promoting secure land tenure and natural resource management when designing and implementing rural development projects. He called for a greater focus on smallholder farmers (and particularly women), "indigenous peoples, herders, artisans, fisherfolk and others, whose struggles in isolated areas all too seldom capture world attention". He concluded that economic growth and poverty eradication "can only happen with a real commitment to bring rural development back to the centre of the development agenda. After a sharp decline in support for agriculture and rural development of the past decade, we are now beginning to realize, once again, that they are central to the entire development agenda."

13. Throughout the three-day meeting, strong support was voiced for a greater role for agricultural and rural development in national development plans and donor strategies. There was widespread agreement that higher investments in rural areas are needed if poverty reduction is to reach adequate levels. Equally important, progress needs to be made in the forthcoming trade negotiations on market access for agricultural and non-agricultural goods. Natural resource management and access to land and water, women's role in agriculture, and the need for infrastructure development were also among the recurring themes emphasized.

III. OUTCOME OF THE ECOSOC HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

14. In the ministerial declaration adopted by the high-level segment (see Annex I), member states reached consensus on the main tenets of an integrated approach to rural development. The document outlines the key elements of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of rural development and recognizes national and international responsibilities for reaching rural development objectives. The declaration is unique in that it consolidates and integrates the various aspects of rural development into one comprehensive document.

15. The ministerial declaration includes a provision for review of progress in the implementation of the declaration in 2005. This follow-up will ensure a continuing focus in ECOSOC on rural development and allow for further elaboration of key policy recommendations.

16. In sum, the ECOSOC high-level segment provided an excellent opportunity for emphasizing the central role of rural and agricultural development in reducing poverty, promoting economic growth and achieving the other MDGs. The ministerial declaration in particular clearly attests to the re-emerging consensus on the importance of rural development in reaching these goals.



United Nations

E/2003/L.9*



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
3 July 2003

Original: English

Substantive session of 2003
Geneva, 30 June-25 July 2003
Item 2 of the provisional agenda**
**Promoting an integrated approach to rural
development in developing countries for poverty
eradication and sustainable development**

Draft ministerial declaration of the high-level segment submitted by the President of the Council on the basis of informal consultations

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations participating in the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2003 of the Economic and Social Council, held from 30 June to 2 July 2003:

(a) Having considered the theme "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development", the report of the Secretary-General on the subject¹ and the contribution of all the participants, including civil society, in the preparatory process of the high-level segment, held on 24 March and 30 April 2003;

(b) Recalling the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences, summits and relevant special sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, including the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, as well as the World Food Summit, held in Rome in 1996, and their five-year reviews, the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002;

(c) Taking note of the fact that rural areas of developing countries are home to three quarters of the world's poor and that insufficient progress has been made in recent years in addressing the issues of poverty, hunger and malnutrition;

(d) Recalling the commitment to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration;

* Reissued for technical reasons.

** E/2003/100.





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(e) Recalling also General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 20 December 2002, entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields";

Have adopted the following declaration.

2. We are convinced that eradication of rural poverty and hunger is crucial for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Rural development should be an integral part of national and international development policies, including bilateral donor response strategies and the activities and programmes of the United Nations system.
3. We express our serious concern regarding the famine facing millions of people, especially in Africa. Recognizing that food security is a global concern, we are committed to respond to the internationally recognized emergency food aid needs and to improve famine prevention mechanisms and long-term food security.
4. Rural development should be pursued through an integrated approach, encompassing the economic, social and environmental dimensions, taking into account the gender perspective and consisting of mutually reinforcing policies and programmes. This approach should be balanced, targeted, situation specific, locally owned, include local synergies and initiatives and be responsive to the needs of rural populations.
5. Rural development is the responsibility of each country and is predicated on an enabling national environment. An enabling international economic environment is important to support effective national development efforts, including rural development efforts. An enabling environment combines effective and coherent policies, good governance and accountable institutions at national and international levels as well as the promotion of gender equality and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. Robust, broad-based and equitable economic growth as well as human resource development are needed to fight rural poverty.
6. In this regard, despite serious efforts to achieve progress, important issues in the implementation of the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organization, adopted at Doha on 20 November 2001,² are still outstanding, in particular regarding the commitments under the said declaration for, inter alia, comprehensive negotiations aimed at substantial improvements in market access. In the agricultural sector, without prejudging the outcome of negotiations, reductions of, with a view to phasing out, all forms of export subsidies, substantial reduction in trade-distorting domestic support and enhanced market access is needed. We recall that special and differential treatment for developing countries shall be an integral part of all elements of the negotiations and shall be embodied in the schedules of concessions and commitments and as appropriate in the rules and disciplines to be negotiated, so as to be operationally effective and to enable developing countries to effectively take account of their development needs, including food security and rural development. We take note of the non-trade concerns reflected in the negotiating proposals submitted by members and confirm that non-trade concerns will be taken into account in the negotiations, as provided for in the Agreement of Agriculture.



7. As for non-agricultural products, we call for reduction or, as appropriate, removal of non-tariff barriers, tariff peaks, high tariffs and tariff escalation to enhance market access, in particular for products of export interest to developing countries.

8. These matters must be urgently addressed by members of the World Trade Organization in order to ensure full implementation of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, including regarding implementation issues and special and differential treatment, and to make a success of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to be held in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003.

9. We invite members of the World Trade Organization to implement the commitments regarding trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building for developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, so that they can benefit from liberalized trade opportunities and adopt measures to reduce supply-side constraints, including by improving productivity and product diversification and enhancing competitiveness and community-based entrepreneurial capacity. We urge them to facilitate the accession of developing countries to the Organization, in particular the least developed countries and countries with economies in transition, taking into account the individual level of development of each country that applies for membership. In this regard, we welcome the recent agreement of the Organization to facilitate the accession of the least developed countries.

10. We recognize the vulnerability of the commodity-dependent developing countries, in particular the low-income countries, to market fluctuations and stress the need to support their efforts for the diversification of exports as a means of increasing export earnings and improving terms of trade and to address the impact of the instability of commodity prices. In this context, it is very important to empower commodity producers in developing countries to insure themselves against risk. We underscore the need for reforming the existing facilities to respond to the needs of the rural poor.

11. We urge developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national product of developed countries to least developed countries, as reconfirmed at the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, and we encourage developing countries to build on progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets. We acknowledge the efforts of all donors, commend those donors whose official development assistance contributions exceed, reach or are increasing towards the targets, and underline the importance of undertaking to examine the means and time frames for achieving the targets and goals.

12. Food security, rural and agricultural development must be adequately addressed in the context of national development and poverty eradication as well as in multilateral and bilateral donor response strategies. To that end, we deem it necessary to increase productive investment in rural and agricultural development to achieve lasting food security. We take note with satisfaction of the undertakings made by the members of the Group of Eight, as contained in the Action Plan against Famine, especially in Africa, adopted in Evian, France, on 3 June 2003, to work towards reversing the decline of official development assistance to agriculture and increasing trade opportunities for developing countries.



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13. External debt relief can play a key role in liberating resources that can then be directed towards activities consistent with attaining sustainable growth and development, and therefore, debt relief measures should, where appropriate, be pursued vigorously and expeditiously, including within the Paris and London Clubs and other relevant forums. Noting the importance of re-establishing financial viability for those developing countries facing unsustainable debt burdens, we welcome initiatives that have been undertaken to reduce outstanding indebtedness and invite further national and international measures in that regard, including, as appropriate, debt cancellation and other arrangements.
14. We are committed to empowering poor women and men to play a full and effective role in their development by enabling them to have a larger voice in decision-making processes, including: resource allocation; promoting mechanisms, including the self-organization of poor people, to influence the market and public policies; and ensuring that poor rural people and their organizations have the opportunity to participate fully in the design, development and implementation of rural development strategies and programmes.
15. We are also committed to the empowerment of rural women at all levels and in all aspects of rural development, including agriculture, nutrition and food security, and to ensuring that the work of women is recognized and valued. We will ensure women's equal access to land, property, adequate housing, economic opportunity, credit, education, skills training and health care, economic welfare, the right to inheritance and the right to contractual agreements, as well as empowerment through full participation in decision-making at all levels.
16. We call for greater access to financial services and labour markets for the rural poor, in particular women, indigenous people and vulnerable groups, and to this end we undertake to simplify existing mechanisms and to facilitate the establishment and strengthening of rural financial institutions, including micro-credit, savings and insurance facilities and cooperative ventures for rural development, as well as the development of professional associations and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.
17. We resolve to promote broad-based economic growth in developing countries and countries with economies in transition by strengthening sustainable agricultural and food policies, improving agricultural productivity, including for basic food commodities, and fostering non-farm rural economic activities.
18. We further resolve to enhance the livelihood of the rural poor by aiming to ensure that they have access to adequate quantities of safe and nutritious food and by creating productive and remunerative on- and off-farm employment opportunities, including through the diversification of the rural economy and employment-generating strategies. In this regard, we will encourage South-South cooperation, including the sharing of experiences and best practices.
19. We reaffirm that sustainable agriculture and rural development are essential to the implementation of an integrated approach to food security and safety in an environmentally sustainable way. We recognize the important role of rural populations in sustainably managing natural resources, including biodiversity, and in combating desertification and land degradation. We pledge to promote environmentally sound and sustainable natural resources management, including the implementation of integrated land management, sustainable forest management



programmes and water-use plans and the use of traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices as well as modern technologies of sustainable resource use and management. We also acknowledge the need, subject to national legislation, to implement actions at all levels to recognize the rights of local and indigenous communities that are holders of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices and, with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices, to develop and implement benefit-sharing mechanisms on mutually agreed terms for their use.

20. We commit ourselves to strengthening the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa and to addressing the causes of desertification and land degradation, in order to maintain and restore land, as well as poverty resulting from land degradation.

21. We recognize the key role of alternative development strategies for sustainable development of the rural areas affected by the illicit cultivation of narcotic plants and call for the promotion of such strategies.

22. We call for concrete steps at both the national and international levels to mobilize public and private investment as well as to enhance access to credit for the development of the physical rural infrastructure in order to enhance productivity and improve access to markets and information.

23. We recognize that research and its effective application are crucial for the development and implementation of appropriate new technologies that are pro-poor and raise on- and off-farm productivity. To that end, we underline the need for measures to increase investment in agricultural research, including modern technologies, natural resources management and capacity-building. We also call for measures to enhance and expand access to information and communication technologies in the rural areas of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

24. We recognize the crucial importance of enhanced access of the rural poor, women and men, to productive assets, in particular land and water, and stress that priority attention should be given to the adoption of policies and the implementation of laws that guarantee well-defined and enforceable land- and water-use rights and promote legal security of tenure, recognizing the existence of different national laws and/or systems of land access and tenure.

25. We also call for enhanced access to social services for poor people in rural and remote areas. We are committed to improving access to quality education for the rural poor, especially the girl child, through increased investment and full utilization of modern techniques and technologies, including the establishment of remote education systems.

26. We recognize the critical link between HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, cholera, typhus and other serious diseases and rural development, as well as their negative impact on the agricultural sector. We also recognize the importance of health, including reproductive health, to: rural development and the eradication of poverty; reducing infant, child and maternal mortality; combating HIV/AIDS; and promoting equality and empowerment among the rural poor, especially women.



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27. We emphasize that full implementation of the Doha Declaration on the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and public health, adopted by the World Trade Organization at Doha on 20 November 2001,³ including its paragraph 6, is important for tackling public health problems, especially those resulting from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other epidemics.
28. We are deeply concerned about the devastating impact of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic, which undermines efforts to eradicate poverty. We recognize that HIV/AIDS has serious debilitating consequences for societies, particularly in Africa. We are therefore committed to the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS concerns into rural development planning, including poverty eradication and food security strategies and multisectoral development activities covering economic and social aspects, taking into account the particular situation of rural women.
29. Bearing in mind that the majority of indigenous people live in rural areas, we recognize the need to implement policies and programmes to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development that are focused on them, taking into account their traditional knowledge and their special relationship with the land.
30. We reaffirm the goal of expanding access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, particularly in the rural areas of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and express our resolve to the expeditious realization of that goal, in accordance with the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.⁴
31. We also reaffirm the need to improve access to reliable, affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound energy services and resources, taking into account national specificities and circumstances, through various means, such as enhanced rural electrification and decentralized energy systems, increased use of renewables, cleaner liquid and gaseous fuels and enhanced energy efficiency, as well as by intensifying regional and international cooperation in support of national efforts, including through capacity-building, financial and technological assistance and innovative financing mechanisms, including at the micro- and meso-levels, recognizing the specific factors for providing access to the poor.
32. We undertake to promote rural-urban linkages by developing and strengthening a system of intermediate-size secondary and tertiary towns to stimulate rural development, as well as to minimize the negative impacts of rural-urban migration. At the same time, we will encourage programmes and policies designed to strengthen rural service centre and small town systems, including strengthening institutions and mechanisms for local or regional planning.
33. We are committed to responding effectively to Africa's special needs for achieving sustainable development and to lending our full support to the development and implementation of national policies and programmes for rural development in Africa. To this end, we reiterate our support for the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the call to channel financial, technical and other types of resources towards the priorities of the New Partnership, in particular infrastructural development, health services, education, water and agriculture. We underline the importance of implementing the initiatives contained



in the New Partnership, in particular those designed to enhance market access and the diversification of production in African economies, which are vulnerable because of their dependence on primary production and natural resources-based sectors.

34. We recognize the special needs of the least developed countries and reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of outcomes of the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, in particular the elements related to rural development, enhanced market access and provision for enhanced technical assistance and support for capacity-building.

35. Recognizing also the special challenges in rural development faced by small island developing States, we reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and emphasize in this regard the importance of the international meeting to be held in Mauritius in 2004. Noting also that the geographical situation of the landlocked developing countries is an added constraint on their efforts to promote rural development, we call for the implementation of specific actions related to the particular needs of those countries.

36. We underline the importance of partnerships at the national and international levels to foster collaboration among actors in different sectors. At the national and local levels, we will encourage local authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities to launch partnerships that support and promote rural development. At the international level, we will facilitate and nurture alliances of Governments, donors, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector for the promotion of integrated rural development.

37. We welcome the work of the organizations of the United Nations system in eradicating rural poverty and promoting rural development and urge them to ensure that measures are implemented to simplify, harmonize and integrate assessment procedures and programming so as to reduce transaction costs and avoid additional procedural requirements for programme countries and enhance support for their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, especially those contained in the Millennium Declaration. We emphasize that national and international poverty reduction strategies should target rural areas and households more systematically by integrating poverty eradication and food security as well as environmental objectives more firmly in poverty reduction strategy papers, where they exist, as well as in common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. We urge the international and regional financial institutions to enhance their support for rural poverty eradication and rural development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

38. We commit ourselves to the implementation of the present declaration and call upon civil society, the organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant actors and organizations to lend their full support to the realization of the objectives of integrated rural development for poverty eradication and sustainable development. We agree to review progress or lack thereof in the implementation of the present declaration at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2005.



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Notes

¹ E/2003/51.

² WT/MIN (01)/DEC/1.

³ WT/MIN (01)/DEC/2.

⁴ *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.



30/06/2003



**Press Release
SG/SM/8767
ECOSOC/6055**

**SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES GLOBAL ACTION ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
IN ADDRESS TO ECOSOC HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT**

GENEVA, 30 June (UN Information Service) -- The following is the address given Monday morning, 30 June, by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the opening meeting of the 2003 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, in Room XIX of the Palais des Nations:

It may not be true that "a rising tide lifts all boats". But it is certainly true that, in bad weather, the weakest boats are the most vulnerable.

It is, therefore, bad news for developing countries that, contrary to expectations, the world economy has yet to recover from its slowdown in 2001, which was its largest setback in a decade. More than 30 developing countries have actually seen their per capita income drop in each of the past two years, and few can now expect to enjoy adequate growth again before the end of 2004.

Moreover, the risk of deflation, the spread of disease, rising unemployment in some countries, overcapacity in several sectors, and lingering geopolitical concerns are combining to undermine confidence, hinder investment and, as ever, make the lives of the poor that much bleaker.

In the face of these threats, our immediate, overriding task must be to stimulate economic growth. But over the long term, combating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) require more than that. We cannot afford to lose sight of the agenda, universally agreed at Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg, to tackle more fundamental development challenges.

Those conferences defined a new global partnership for development. They have given us clear strategies for bringing real vigour to the development process and for deploying resources — domestic and foreign, human and financial, existing and new -- where they can have the greatest impact. The challenge now is not to decide what to do, but rather, simply, to do it.

But if major strides have been made towards linking financing and development, much remains to be done to make it easier for poor countries to improve their situation through trade.

The programme agreed to in Doha is more than just another round of trade negotiations. It aims to eliminate the unfair competition faced by farmers and producers in poor countries, and to open developed-country markets to developing-country goods —



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especially agricultural products. It seeks to give poor people better access to life-saving medicines, while preserving the incentives for medical research. In the broadest sense, it could provide a powerful engine of growth, thus, facilitating the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

This is a reasonable, achievable set of goals. Yet, success is by no means assured. There are only 10 weeks left before the ministerial meeting in Cancún. Key deadlines have been missed. The time has come for all parties to show more flexibility, and give priority to the global interest. It is not too late to avoid a setback for economic development.

Of course, even a successful outcome on trade will not mean that developing countries can manage without aid and debt relief. This is especially true of the least developed countries.

Galvanizing development and seizing new trading opportunities depends on technologies, transport, capital, and much else. Developed countries and aid agencies can make an important contribution here, not by doing the heavy lifting -- that is the responsibility of developing countries themselves -- but by helping to build the infrastructure, develop the human resource base and adopt sound policies. For poor countries to achieve "take-off", two doors must open: the door to markets in the developed world, and the door in developing countries that internal barriers too often keep closed, stifling the entrepreneurial energies of their people.

Fortunately, the long and troubling decline in aid appears to have been halted. But aid flows are still at the mercy of recession and spending cuts in some key Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) economies. Moreover, even if the commitments made in Monterrey were to be fulfilled, we will still be far short of what is required for us to meet the Development Goals, \$100 billion per year is what is required. Some very promising proposals -- such as the one put forward by the Chancellor of the United Kingdom, Gordon Brown, the International Finance Facility -- is an encouraging proposal, and I think that it has the possibility of improving the quantity and the quality of the assistance. I urge all donors to keep an open mind and, again, to act on the basis of the interests that are shared by all.

If there is one place where all these concerns come together; where the needs are greatest and the suffering most acute; and which can be called the locus of global poverty, it is the world's rural areas.

Rural development is rightly the theme of this high-level segment. In those rural areas live three quarters of the world's poorest people -- defined as those living on \$1 or less per day. Some 900 million such people draw their meagre livelihoods from agriculture and other rural activities.

They are on the frontlines of drought, desertification, and environmental degradation.

They are the farmers -- women, above all -- whose hard labour is undermined by protectionism, meagre infrastructure and, increasingly, the spread of AIDS.

They are the indigenous peoples, herders, artisans, fisherfolk and others, whose struggles in isolated areas all too seldom capture world attention.

Address the needs of these men, women and children, and we will have real hope of achieving the MDGs. Empower these resourceful and resilient individuals, and they will show us how to fight poverty and hunger.



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Rural development entails more investment in agricultural research and in developing higher yield crops adapted to local conditions. And it requires efficient water management, resulting in “more crop per drop”.

It involves increasing non-farm income and employment, so that the rural poor are less vulnerable to crop failures and other calamities.

It means secure land tenure and, in some places, land reform.

It means a new green revolution: more productive farming, more sustainably pursued.

It means focusing on the least developed countries, in accordance with the Brussels Plan of Action, whose progress you will be reviewing for the first time here.

And as I have already stressed, it will require developed countries to allow agricultural products from developing countries to reach their markets, unimpeded by direct or disguised barriers such as subsidies.

All this can happen only with a real commitment to bring rural development back to the centre of the development agenda. After a sharp decline in support for agriculture and rural development over the past decade, we are now beginning to realize, once again, that they are central to the entire development agenda. Nowhere will our commitment be put to the test more than in Africa, where food insecurity and AIDS are working in vicious tandem to thwart the continent’s rural development.

As a central United Nations body for development policy and policy coherence, the Economic and Social Council must ensure that the United Nations system brings all its capacities to bear on these challenges — in integrated fashion, and working in concert with the full range of partners.

With that aim in view, I wish you all possible success in your deliberations.